

- 1 1. An apparatus for connecting buyers and sellers of products and services comprising:  
2 a comprehensive directory of companies;  
3 a user-maintained database of companies selected from said comprehensive  
4 directory; and,  
5 service-brokering tools for interacting with said directory of companies and user-  
6 maintained database of companies, wherein said service-brokering tools comprise:  
7 contacting means for buyers and sellers to contact one another over a  
8 network;  
9 searching means for said buyers and sellers to search said directory and  
10 said user-maintained database based on geographical boundaries; and  
11 branding means for defining visual attributes that can be used to  
12 dynamically generate a branded Web site
- 13 2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said service-brokering tools further comprise:  
14 an internal mechanism for a Web server to infer a private label interface from an  
15 initial network request, URL or IP address
- 16 3. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein said service-brokering tools further comprise:  
17 a partner object that can persist and cache said private label interface information  
18 for a Web server.
- 19 4. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein said service-brokering tools further comprise:  
20 Objects that can be used to generate private label interface-specific HTML.
- 21 5. The apparatus of claim 4 wherein said service-brokering tools further comprise:  
22 a mechanism to publish a pending Partner record to the active record and inform  
23 all servers within a farm of load-balanced Web servers to re-load said active record.
- 24 6. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein said service-brokering tools further comprise:  
25 a mechanism to synchronize partner information across said farm of load-  
26 balanced Web servers.

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- 2 7. An apparatus for connecting buyers and sellers of products and services comprising:
- 3 means for network data sharing, wherein said means for network data sharing
- 4 allows said buyers and sellers to supply and access said network data;
- 5 means for geographic radius searching, wherein said means for geographic radius
- 6 searching allows said buyers and sellers to search said network data within specified
- 7 geographic boundaries; and
- 8 means for partner web site branding, wherein said means for partner web site
- 9 branding allows said buyers and sellers to form a community to facilitate the sharing of
- 10 said network data.
- 11
- 12 8. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said means for network data sharing comprises:
- 13 a data sharing engine for collecting, storing and controlling access to said network
- 14 data of said sellers;
- 15 means for a subscription sales process for authorizing access of said sellers to said
- 16 data sharing engine;
- 17 a request brokering engine for allowing said buyers to express detailed requests to
- 18 the sellers who have been authorized by said means for subscription sales process and
- 19 subsequently receive responses to said detailed requests;
- 20 an object catalog manager for maintaining statistical information collected from
- 21 said data sharing engine and said request brokering engine; and
- 22 means for a catalog synchronization process for updating and synchronizing the
- 23 statistical information maintained by said object catalog manager.
- 24
- 25 9. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said means for geographic radius searching comprises:
- 26 a GeoCode table containing data relating latitude and longitude information to
- 27 geographic locations;
- 28 a GroupedGeoCode table containing an aggregated form of the data from said
- 29 GeoCode table; and
- 30 means for searching comprising a database compiled from normalized data from
- 31 said GeoCode table and said GroupedGeoCode table.

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- 2 10. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said means for partner web site branding comprises:
- 3 a partner management tool for allowing a partner to edit a private label interface
- 4 web site;
- 5 a brand distribution service for publishing modifications made by said partner
- 6 management tool; and
- 7 a partner branding framework for generating web pages according to branding
- 8 information from said brand distribution service.
- 9
- 10 11. The apparatus of claim 10 wherein said partner branding framework comprises:
- 11 a web server with software having encapsulating technologies;
- 12 programming objects for controlling the encapsulation of branding information by
- 13 said software; and
- 14 a template used as a foundation for all pages of said web server;
- 15
- 16 12. A method for connecting buyers and sellers of products and services comprising the steps
- 17 of:
- 18 network data sharing;
- 19 geographic radius searching; and
- 20 partner web site branding.
- 21
- 22 13. The method of claim 12 wherein network data sharing comprises the steps of:
- 23 using a data sharing engine to collect, store and control access to the network data
- 24 of said sellers;
- 25 a subscription sales process for authorizing access of said sellers to said data
- 26 sharing engine;
- 27 using a request brokering engine to allow said buyers to express detailed requests
- 28 to the sellers who have been authorized by said subscription sales process and
- 29 subsequently receive responses to said detailed requests;
- 30 using an object catalog manager to maintain statistical information collected from
- 31 said data sharing engine and said request brokering engine; and

1 a catalog synchronization process for updating and synchronizing the statistical  
2 information maintained by said object catalog manager.

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- 4 14. The method of claim 13 wherein said subscription sales process comprises:
- 5 navigating to a private labeled interface;
- 6 clicking a registration hyperlink;
- 7 selecting a subscription package;
- 8 building a profile of a company;
- 9 categorizing the profile by selecting main categories and sub-categories from a
- 10 local taxonomy of the private labeled interface; and
- 11 creating an affiliation between the company and the private labeled interface.
- 12

- 13 15. The method of claim 12 wherein said geographic radius searching comprises the steps of:
- 14 relating latitude and longitude information to geographic locations;
- 15 aggregating information relating latitude and longitude to geographic locations in
- 16 order to generate unique latitude and longitude coordinates;
- 17 normalizing said aggregated information;
- 18 importing said normalized information into a database; and
- 19 searching said database.
- 20

- 21 16. The method of claim 12 wherein said partner web site branding comprises the steps of:
- 22 editing a private label interface web site using a partner management tool;
- 23 publishing modifications using a brand distribution service; and
- 24 generating web pages according to branding information from said brand
- 25 distribution service.
- 26

- 27 17. A method for connecting buyers and sellers of products and services comprising:
- 28 maintaining a comprehensive on-line directory of sellers;
- 29 providing an RFP application for integration into a Web site of a partner;
- 30 co-branding said RFP application;
- 31 maintaining a searchable directory of companies for said partner;

- 1 providing an e-commerce infrastructure;
- 2 marketing a private-labeled web site of said partner; and
- 3 providing usage and revenue reports that will detail usage on the private-labeled
- 4 web site.

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